



Robert J. Glass  
Superintendent of Schools

September 20, 2011

To the Honorable Sen. Pavlov and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am writing to express my deep concern about Senate Bills 618, 620, 622, 623, and 624. I will briefly explain my concerns about each bill.

**SB 618 - Charter Expansion:** our district is doing an outstanding job of educating its students. Is this bill for the benefit of the students of Michigan or for the benefit of vendors? Oakland Schools has financial data that shows that charter operators spend LESS money on instruction than the public schools. The Detroit News published a story less week on an investigation they did on a Detroit Charter school, showing it spent less money on instruction than the public schools. Also, I hear from legislators that Michigan has too many public school districts and must consolidate, yet many of these same people are pushing the creation of charter schools, which cannot offer the same level of instruction or programming that larger districts provide their students. It seems to me that the expansion of charter schools is a lose-lose: districts who lose students to charters must reduce instruction and programming to all their other students due to the reduction in funding, and charters will be hard pressed to replicate the programming of their public school counterparts. Advocating consolidation of districts and the expansion of charter schools is an oxymoron.

**SB 620 - Conversion Schools:** Bloomfield Hills closed two elementary schools 3 years ago due to declining enrollment and declining funding. We knew we needed to streamline our operations. We are still engaged in a lawsuit over the closing of one of them. In case you have never been a part of it, a district closing a school is hands-down the hardest and most emotional thing a district can do. There is no doubt in my mind that in the heat of the moment, it would have been possible to get 51% of parents to vote to "convert" their beloved elementary school. But that leaves many unanswered questions. 1) What if the majority of teachers in this school did not want this? It is doubtful a district could absorb them if this happened, as districts staff according to student numbers. 2) What if we lost 200 or more students overnight? This would have lead to instructional and programming cuts to ALL REMAINING students district-wide, because of the loss of per pupil funding. 3) What happens to the property of the conversion school? All taxpayers in a district paid for it. Is the district obligated to rent it to the conversion school? Does the conversion school get ownership of it? What if a district significantly remodeled or built a new school and it was made a conversion school? Would taxpayers be willing to support such bonds if they thought their board of education could lose control of such property? 4) What happens to the remaining students if 51% of parents and teachers vote for conversion and their parents did not want this change? Would they then have to attend another school, possibly much farther away, then their "home" school?

Comprehensive Education at its Finest

4175 Andover Road • Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48302 • 248.341.5407 • [www.bloomfield.org](http://www.bloomfield.org)

September 20, 2011

This legislation has the potential for many disruptive and harmful unintended consequences.

SB 622 and SB 623 - Dual Enrollment Expansion: again, this could be another blow to a district's financial stability and funding, resulting in further cuts to the remaining students in the district.

SB 624 - Mandatory Statewide Choice: Why mandate this? Why take away local control like this? Our residents pay a premium to live in our district. Currently, 2 out of 3 of our property tax dollars sent to Lansing go to students outside of our district. And while there has been some back-peddling by saying it's up to a district to determine capacity, this brings a whole host of problems for a district, and it's not clear what "capacity" means. It is not out of the question to think a district could be sued over this matter. It would, again, affect us adversely from a financial point of view. Under Proposal A, our voters are allowed to vote to tax themselves a set amount of \$4000 per pupil, every ten years. Our voters have overwhelmingly voted for this. But will they continue to do so if they feel non-resident students are too high a proportion of our students? Also, our resident students would be losing opportunities due to the proportional decrease in funding that would accompany out of district residents.

I thank you for your time and attention on these matters, and I urge you to not put them to the floor of the Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kate Pettersen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Pettersen, Secretary  
Bloomfield Hills Board of Education